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Montana State Historical Records Advisor

The Montana Archivist

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HERITAGE MUSEUM IN LIBBY: THE CREATION OF AN ARCHIVES

By Sami Pearson, Archivist

Due to a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission awarded through the Montana Historical Society, the Heritage Museum in Libby, Montana, was able to begin a rather monumental project. That project was the creation of an archives of historical material housed in the Heritage Museum. This archives would achieve two main objectives: preserving the historic documents residing in the museum's extensive collections and making them accessible where they were not before.

The museum was able to gain the assistance of Anne Foster, the Traveling Archivist funded by a grant to the SHRAB, for the month of October 2000 to begin the process. A week before her arrival, volunteers busily emptied the former workshop area of the museum to create space for documents, shelving, and a work area. The tools and supplies previously housed in the workshop were placed in a new building behind the museum built exclusively as a workshop.

Upon Anne's arrival she led the museum volunteers and various board members through a process of crafting and writing collections policies and procedures. Following the policies creation, she prioritized the work that needed to be done and began training volunteers. During the month Anne was in Libby, several collections were completed and thirteen volunteers were trained in proper handling procedures. Anne returned in March of 2001 to check on the progress and help the volunteers with additional training.

The same group of dedicated volunteers that started the initial project decided to continue on their quest to create an archives that could be used not only by community members, but also a much wider audience. A collaborative effort between the Libby School District, the Lincoln County Public Libraries, and the Heritage Museum was created to benefit access to historical documents in Libby. A $178,000 Institute of Museum and Library Services grant was applied for and received. The idea behind the grant was to create a model that could be applied to areas similar to Libby by using a library and museum partnership to create access to historic information. The Heritage Museum had close to twenty five years of materials and artifacts that were inaccessible to the general public due to lack of cataloging. The IMLS grant would allow the museum to catalog its collections and work closely with the school district and the libraries to disseminate the information about the collections. A full time archivist was hired to continue training the volunteers and lead the effort to catalog the collections. With a full time archivist, volunteers have greater flexibility of hours, the research room is open close to forty hours a week, and archival training is ongoing.

Not only did the IMLS grant provide an employee but also money to properly house the valuable historical papers regarding Libby and Lincoln County. As collections are processed and finding aids written, the papers are permanently housed in acid free folders and boxes. Photographs are encapsulated to prevent damage. Maps and other large items are filed in a ten drawer flat file. Expanded shelving has allowed collections to be grouped together and remain easily accessible for researchers.

Through the efforts of the volunteers, the archives are starting to be used on a regular basis. Local students involved in the Montana Heritage Project are taking advantage of the sources on a weekly basis and research requests from outside the immediate area are coming in through email and telephone. *(cont. on p.3)*

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UM & MHS ARCHIVES RECEIVE GRANT

The University of Montana and the Montana Historical Society archives have both received a portion of a $350,000 National Endowment for the Humanities grant as part of the Northwest Digital Archives consortium.

The 2 year project, which consists of a consortium of 15 repositories at 13 institutions in Montana, Washington, Oregon and Idaho, will provide enhanced access to archival materials through a union database of finding aids. The database, which will be available on the web, will include information on over 2,000 collections across the Northwest.

By making information from many institutions available in one database, researchers will be able to make significant subject connections between collections at many institutions. Significant subjects held in common include agriculture, forest products, fisheries and natural resources; urban and rural social and progressive movements; local, state, regional, and national politics; outdoor recreation; Native American language and culture; and the place of religious communities in the region.

Participating institutions are the University of Montana, Montana Historical Society, University of Idaho, Oregon Historical Society, Oregon State University, University of Oregon, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies (Western Washington University), Pacific Lutheran University, Seattle Municipal Archives, University of Washington, Washington State Archives, Washington State University, and Whitworth College.

EVENTS IN & AROUND MONTANA

April 25-27:	Museums Association of Montana annual conference, Butte
April 25-27:	Montana Library Association annual conference, Great Falls
April 26-27:	Northwest Archivists, Inc. annual conference, Corvallis, WA
May 3:	SHRAB meeting, Helena
May 4:	Montana State Genealogical Society board meeting, Helena
May 20-25:	ARMA Basic Blitz workshops, Kalispell, Havre, and Glasgow
June 23-29:	History Camp for Kids, Virginia and Nevada Cities
July 7-10:	History Camp for Educators, Virginia and Nevada Cities

LECTURE ON "PRESERVING YOUR FAMILY MOMENTOS" AVAILABLE

What do you do with fading family photographs, grainy videos, and yellowing newspaper clippings? The program "Preservi[ng] Your Family Mementos" by certified archivist and SHRAB board member Anne Foster will answer this question and more. From cherished baby pictures to scrapbooks of high school football exploits, everyone keeps tokens of those special moments in life. Unfortunately, time and the environment conspire to ruin these precious items. "Luckily," explains Foster, "there are some things you can do to slow the deterioration and preserve your family heirlooms for future generations." Accompanied by slides and handouts, Foster discusses museum preservation techniques anyone can master.

The program is available free of charge to any nonprofit organization in Montana; venues outside of Yellowstone County will be asked to reimburse travel expenses. For more information or to schedule a talk, contact Anne Foster, Huntley Project Museum; PO Box 353; Huntley, MT 59037; phone (406)348-2533; email hpmia@nemontel.net.

COLLECTIONS ON THE MOVE

The University of Montana Archives and Special Collections will move into a new facility in the summer of 2002. Since 1975, the department has been housed in the traditional Archives location of the library's sub-basement, but will now move to a new facility on the fourth floor. For visitors to the department, this means a quiet and pleasant reading room in which to work, spacious new display cases, and a space in which to attend seminars and receptions. For the materials, it means growth space in storage areas, a clean and uncarpeted floor, and a state-of-the-art fire protection system. And for the Archives and Special Collections staff, it means all this plus windows in the workroom and offices!

NOTE: UM Staff News Jodi Allison-Bunnell, UM Archivist, will resign from the University of Montana, effective June 30, 2002. She may continue to work past that date until the library can hire a replacement archivist. Jodi will also continue to serve on the SHRAB.

MONTANA UNION CATALOG

The Montana Union Catalog is a special program of the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), which is sponsored by the Library of Congress, designed to make the records of archives in Montana available to researchers around the nation and the world. NUCMC provides bibliographic records and makes associated authority records for collections in the custody of repositories located throughout the country. The repositories must be open to researchers on a regular basis and must be unable to contribute cataloging to a national computer database on their own. Small archives that are open to the public are especially encouraged to participate in this project. NUCMC will catalog manuscript collections, oral histories, multimedia materials, and individual manuscript items (such as a diary, letter, or journal). The project aims to provide widespread access to the holdings of archives of all sizes. If you or your organization is interested in participating in this project, please contact Tony Gonzalas at the Library of Congress, (202) 707-7954, or Ellie Arguimbau at the Montana Historical Society, (406) 444-4774. Cataloging submitted to NUCMC is available for researchers on the internet at http://lcweb.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html.

SHRAB MEETING

The Montana State Historic Records Advisory Board will hold the first of its biannual meetings for 2002 in Helena on Friday, May 3, at 1:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the third floor conference room of the Montana Historical Society, 225 N Roberts Street. The public is welcome to attend. Discussion will include reappointment of current Board members, the appointment of new members, and future activities. For more information contact Molly Miller, State Coordinator, at 444-7482 or momiller@state.mt.us.

LIBBY (CONT.)

A research request tracking system has been implemented to gauge general use and individual collection use. With the increased activity at the museum, community interest is rising. Donations of historical documents have increased along with the number of volunteers wanting to become involved. For more information on the Heritage Museum in Libby, contact Sami Pearson at museum@libby.org or (406) 293-4733.

JOB OPENING: ASSISTANT PROGRAM MANAGER, LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

Montana Historical Society

Position: The Montana Historical Society seeks an Assistant Program Manager for the Library & Archives Program. The position is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating a program of patron service that effectively delivers historical research and reference assistance to the public statewide and nationally. The position provides direction for the acquisition, cataloging, and maintenance of archival and library resources; assists the Program Manager in administering the program's budget, policies, and equipment; and provides training and technical assistance to library and archives staff.

Qualifications: This position requires skills and abilities typically acquired through a combination of education and experience equivalent to a Master's degree in Library & Archival Science with an undergraduate degree in history or a related field; or a Master's degree in History with three to five years direct experience as an archivist or librarian. The position requires at least three years of supervisory experience. Successful grant writing experience is desirable.

Institution: The Montana Historical Society is the repository for the official records of the state of Montana. The Library and Archives also holds extensive manuscript, photographic, map, newspaper, and book collections pertaining to the fur trade and exploration, mining, railroads, and early settlement in Montana and the west.

Salary Range: $33,000 - $42,000 annual salary (Montana salary grade 16, pending classification, position #51700076).

Closing Date: May 6, 2002.

Application Procedure: Candidates must submit a letter of interest, and complete a State of Montana employment application and supplemental questions (see http://www.state.mt.us/css/statejobs) to the MHS Personnel Office, 225 No. Roberts St., PO Box 201201, Helena, MT 59601-1201. For more information contact Dr. Charlene Porsild, Library & Archives Program Manager, voice: 444-4787; email: cporsild@state.mt.us.

IF YOU HAVE an item you would like to include in the next *Montana Archivist*, please contact Molly Miller at 444-7482 or momiller@state.mt.us.

Montana Archivist

Montana State Historical
Records Advisory Board

Montana Historical Society
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STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

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LIFE BY COMPARISON: THE STORIES OF FREDERICK & PARMLY BILLINGS

Sponsored by the Museum Loan Network

This exhibit at the Western Heritage Center in Billings shares the stories of Frederick Billings of Woodstock, Vermont, and his eldest son, Parmly.

Frederick Billings was an influential lawyer in early-day California, served as president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and was recognized as one of our nation's first conservationists. The Northern Pacific Railroad honored Frederick Billings' legacy with the establishment of Billings, Montana in 1882. Parmly Billings, Frederick and Julia Billings' first child, came to Billings, Montana, in 1884 to make a name for himself. He and his cousin, Edward Bailey, became important members of the newly platted railroad town. Parmly died during a return trip to his family home in Woodstock, Vermont, in 1888. He was only twenty-five years old. The Parmly Billings Memorial Library, a gift of the Billings family and dedicated in 1901, now houses the Western Heritage Center.

The speeches and letters of Frederick and Parmly Billings document the lives of a successful 19th century capitalist and Victorian father and his spirited young son. Parmly Billings' letters, many available for the first time, often idealized his Woodstock, Vermont, home life in contrast to h[illegible] experience in Billings during the 1880s. For example, Parmly Billings (in Billings) in a letter to his mother, Julia Billings, on July 7, 1887, writes home, "You know Teddy [Cousin] is fond of good butter and good coffee - two things that one only meets with out here, in his dreams. But after all we only enjoy life by comparison. I really think it does not make much difference where or how we live providing we get used to it."

The exhibit compares and contrasts life in Billings, Montana, with Woodstock, Vermont, in the 1880s, through Billings' family letters, family heirlooms, artifacts on loan from Vermont, and music cited in the letters and speeches of Frederick and Parmly Billings. The exhibit is open through November 15, 2002. In May, we are hosting four nationally recognized speakers that will share the history of Billings, the Yellowstone Valley, and conservation history. On May 11, we have a Wendy's Family Fun Day that features live music and hands-on activities. For more information check our web site ywhc.org and view our on-li[illegible] exhibit of the same name. The Museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00-5:00 and located on 2822 Montana Avenue, downtown Billings.